

Preliminary Amendment  
Application No. 09/815,857  
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chamber of the lower filter unit and with the inlet of each of the passages of the upper filter unit;

- a discharge chamber for the upper filter unit located in the top portion of the filter housing around said upper filter unit, the discharge chamber being in fluid communication with the outlet of each of the passages of the upper filter unit and with the outlet of the housing;

- [means for hermetically separating] wherein the reception chamber of the lower filter unit [and] is hermetically separated from the discharge chamber of the upper filter unit; and

- [mounting means for mounting] wherein the filter units are vertically mounted in the filter housing.

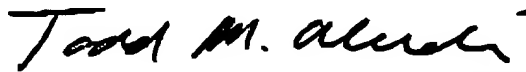
#### REMARKS

By the foregoing Amendment, Claim 24 is amended to remove certain "means plus function" language which may have led to an overly restrictive reading of the claims. Applicants believe that Claim 24 remains patentable over the cited prior art for the reasons set forth in the previously issued Notice of Allowance. Claims 21 and 22 have been amended so as to correspond with amended Claim 24 from which both indirectly depend.

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For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submits that all pending claims, namely Claims 3-4, 6-13, 18, 20-22 and 24-27, remain patentable over the references of record, and earnestly solicit allowance of the same.

Respectfully submitted,



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